Community Policing and Crime Control in Machakos County, Kenya

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Abstract

There exists a wide gap in the information available related to security, crime and crime control in Kenya. A number of researchers have explored on community policing as a practice of controlling crime which is still not adequate to effectively handle the issues of rising crime levels in Kenya every day. Crime impacts on nearly all Kenyans lives making it hard for Kenyans to engage in productive activities to realize their dreams. This study sought to assess how community policing affect crime control in Machakos County, Kenya. It was anchored on the securitization theory. The study adopted descriptive case study research design. Primary and secondary sources of data were employed. The study established that community policing in Machakos had made a remarkable milestone in engaging the community and launching problem-solving efforts. The conclusion was that adoption of community policing had a huge impact on crime levels. The study recommended that reinvigorating community policing is essential as this acts as a primary key feature in detection of potential criminal threats in a society.

Keywords: *Community Policing, Crime Control, Machakos County*

1.0 Introduction

According to Chimera and Likaka (2014) crime control is often guided by an offense that has already taken place. Crime is a serious social problem that directly reduces the quality of the life of individuals and the community (Muller, 2011). Crime control has become more and more an important topic in modern criminology in the last decades. The modern-day development of crime prevention and control in America is closely linked with a mistrust in the criminal justice that resulted to a dramatic increase in crime rates in the 1960s which was caused by lack of public support in the criminal justice system due to its ineffective and inefficiency in controlling crime (Karstedt, 2019).

In the recent years, crime prevention has become an effective strategy to control crime in that it brings about a balance between prevention and punishment (Waller, 2006). There are some positive effects felt from testing other strategies of controlling crime and therefore, a need to test other strategies of controlling crime to protect citizens and their property (Sherman,

2006). We live in an unsafe society and a detailed study on crime control and security management has not been given the attention it deserves (Karen, 2005).

Community policing as a strategy of controlling crime is may be viewed as a philosophy as well as a strategy of an organization (a means of conducting a strategy) which enables agencies of security majorly the police towards working in togetherness in solving challenges of safety, disorder and crime matters in order to enhance every inhabitant's life (Ngare, 2007). In Kenya community policing concept was spearheaded by Kaguthi, embraced since 2003 and officially launched in 2005 as a proactive process employed for purposes of maintaining cohesion, law and order as well as respecting the rule of law. The objectives of community policing are to promote community safety and security through enhanced partnership between the community, the police and all stakeholders in identifying and solving common security challenges, improve reporting of crimes and encouraging sharing of information (National Police Action plan 2003-2007). According to Sir Robert Peel, Principles of Policing (1829) is the key to preventing and controlling crime is earning public support where every community member must share the responsibility of controlling crime as if they were all volunteer members of the police force.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenya is experiencing a challenge with the rise in the crime levels. Peri-urban and rural communities have not been spared either (Murithi & Wanjohi, 2014). Yatta is faced by a number of security threats such as robbery, theft and murder. Its closeness to Thika town makes its prone to these crimes as criminals tend to easily hide in Yatta after committing crime in Nairobi Thika and their environs. Kitur Sarguta Lebishoy (2013) carried out a research on paradigm shift in Kenya security intelligence service whose study was based on the gap of the intelligence literature in Kenya. He concluded that more research needs to be done so as to increase the scope of literature available on intelligence gathering and its role in crime control.

Wilson Boinnett a former Director General NSIS on National Intelligence paradigm found out that there is a need to update work done on the role of Kenya intelligence system in social, economic and political stability of a nation. He also found out that there was a need to replace the old crude and inhuman method of extorting information from and about suspects with an intelligence service based on democratic principles and respect for humanity. Traditionally, the role of maintaining law and order and controlling crime has been left with the security agents mainly the police whom the citizen had developed so much fear towards mainly due to their unkind approach towards the citizens. Chumba, (2012) asserts that the security agents must improve their working relationship with the public they serve so as to effectively solve the security concerns that affect them. Christopher (2017) carried out a research in Nairobi County and found out that there is need to partner with the public in every aspect of decision making including coming up with alternatives. Christopher (2017) also carried out his research in Busia County where he observed that leadership in Busia County demonstrated weak decision making process, inadequate communication and insufficient gathering of information and the solutions that best suit the problems they face. Christopher then suggested that other studies be carried out on the influence of community driven approach on issues affecting people such as crime control.

Mohammad and Aktar (2016) found that elected leaders in Bangladesh are not committed to involving the public but only involve only the influential hence the need to carry out further research on the importance of involving citizen on matters affecting them. Biwott (2017) carried out a research on factors that influence the implementation of community policing programme in Kenya, a case of Nyeri Police Station and concluded that there is need to have a comprehensive mechanism that motivates and encourages inclusive decision making among security agents hence the need for conducting security meetings that involve security agents from different departments to identify and discuss issues related to crime control.

Since the introduction and adoption of community policing in 2005 as a way of controlling crime, crime levels have still been high with rise in terrorism. Yatta being on the transit point along the major Thika- Garissa highway, it has become prone to crime hence the need to find out how well can the community members work with the security agents to arrest the situation. It becomes a way of sharing knowledgeable about these risks and how well they can be dealt with.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to assess how community policing affect crime control in Machakos County, Kenya.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This paper was anchored on Securitization Theory. Securitization theory outlines that national security policy is not naturally given but carefully designed by political class and decision makers. Securitization is the process of state actors transforming subjects into matters of security (Nyman, 2013). The social constructivist method of conceptualizing security is known as securitization. According to securitization theory, political issues are classified as extreme security concerns to be dealt with as an urgent matter (Taureck, 2006). Securitization theory challenges traditional approach of security by sparking a debate between narrowers and wideners. Narrowers were concerned with the security of the state while wideners included other threats that affected people rather than the state.

Therefore, securitization is an important theory as it helps one understand traditional approaches to security that over focused on the state rather than the people. This theory can be applied in evaluating how well security management strategies such as community policing can be applied to effectively control crime and all other factors surrounding effective security management strategies. Securitization is being applied interdisciplinary work such as terrorism (Buzan, 2006) and transnational crime (Williams, 2008) which are threats to effectively managing security.

3.0 Empirical Review

3.1 Crime control

Formal and informal crime control methods are used to deter individuals from engaging in criminal behavior (Eric & Elechi, 2010). Formal crime control mostly relies on the law and the government agencies to curb criminal activities while informal methods of controlling crime relies on moral and social institutions such as the family or the church. High crime rates drag development in any country hence crime control deserves a priority in any nation's development (Phillip, 2009). Effective control of crime sets pace for increasing property values, investment, job growth and improved standard of living (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019).

Frequently cited factors that led to increased crime rate in Hong Kong were; age, economy, social malaise, abortion, guns, gangs, use of drugs as well as crime opportunities (Siegel & Senna, 2005). Hong Kong has been ranked as one of the safest metropolises by both world governments and the UN crime victim surveys. This has been enabled by Hong Kong's anti-crime efforts and support of law enforcement measures as well as cultural factors such as utilitarian familism, Confucianism and extended kinship (Broadhurst, Roderic & Ching, 2007). In Hong Kong some offences such as fire-arm related often result in lengthy sentences compared to sentences given in other Western countries for like offences and this has contributed in low crimes rates. Between 1950s and 1960s Hong Kong suffered several civil disturbances and crime rates for homicide and robbery (Hong Kong Police report, 2008).

South Africa has a notably high rate of crime with murder, assaults, rape and violent crimes being rampant (Eldered, 2015). In February 2007, the Centre for the study of Violence and Reconciliation was contracted by the South African Government to conduct a study on the nature of crime in South Africa. This study highlighted several factors that led to high crime rates which include the normalization of crime, a subculture of violence and criminality, the vulnerability of young people, poverty, unemployment as well as reliance on criminal justice system (Kangethe, Manomano & Ndonga, 2016). The annual South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics not only revealed high levels of crime but also confirmed that crime still affects the poorer South Africans (Felix, 2019). In the analysis of the 2017/2018 crime statistics, the SAPS concluded that violence is so normalized in South Africa that ordinary people commit horrific acts in response to crime.

Since 2003, the Government of Kenya embraced community policing as a strategy of controlling crime. Strategies such as holding peace meetings by administrators, information gathering and sharing are important elements of controlling crime and can yield better results if applied together with community policing in Kenya (Kenya Police, 2013). The security agencies play a significant role in crime control and thus should not be separated from but rather be joined in the partnership with the community in controlling crime (Fridell, 2004). There is a general realization that high crime rates affect investment and the general social life in Kenya (KIPPRA, 2014). Approaches to crime control in Kenya have developed over time and are reflected in different United Nations resolutions in policies and practices. The emphasis is not only on crime control but also on how this can be used to maintain and reinforce social cohesion of communities to collectively act and improve their social lives (ICPC, 2019). National security involves mapping out an area, the specific security concerns and coming up with ways of containing the security situation. There are a number of strategies that can be employed in an area to control crime. This study has focused on four strategies namely; community policing, security meetings, peace Barazas and intelligence gathering and the effects of incorporating these strategies in curbing crime. Gill and Bennet (2014) stated that reduction of fear of crime has been associated with community policing programs since their conception. Cordner (2015) concluded that it is now widely-accepted that community policing helps reduce crime levels and increases perceptions of safety. Community policing emerged in the early 1980s as a response to criticism regarding the professional style of policing and has solidified itself as the primary means of police service delivery (Reed, 2013).

3.2 Community Policing

As the US Department of Justice describes it, community policing alludes to a philosophy which stimulates strategies of an organization which aid the methodical utilization of partners as well as techniques of solving problems to aggressively address instant conditions which bring about issues related to the security of the public for instance crime. Those who supported community policing suggested that a close partnership between security agents such as the police, community members can strengthen the well-being of the society members (Cordner, 2015). Community policing is not a program, it is not a set of activities, and it is not personal designation but a law enforcement philosophy, a way of thinking about improving public safety. Community partnerships are critical for community policing efforts to be effective (Muguire & Wells, 2009).

In the US early policing took 2 types (communal and informal) formerly referred to as watch (Spitzer, 2007). Policing within US in late 19th Century was made difficult by immigration and migration that redesigned ethnic and culture of cities. The period from about 1900-1920 was tumultuous time for security agents. Attempts of reforming the system of police in the late 19th century came from outside the police system while in the early 20th century; the pressures for the reforms were fueled from inside the police system itself (Kappeler, 2009). In the 1960s and 1970s policing in the US underwent a crisis, crime constantly rose. It was assumed by both civilian and security groups that the primary role of the security agents and mostly the police officers were fighting crime by especially making arrests. New research revealed that crime control was through resolving conflicts. Meanwhile police department in the US aimed at increasing their success through enhancing their relation with the community they served with. Nonetheless, study of policing effectiveness in few cities in US did not manage to show an enhancement over control of crime. Resistance to change to this new way of promoting security and insufficient training led to the failure of the policing team.

Community policing became part of a national strategy to combat crime in the US in the 1990s (Gary, 2013). Legislation sanctioned in year 1994 given for deploying more officers on community policing and establishing office of community grounded services of policing, under the dominion of the Justice Department. By the early 21st century police department in the US had a community policing plan organized into sub-units (Brodgen, 2015). Some police officers have been reluctant to support the initiative by clinging into the traditional crime control model viewing it as an effective overall policing strategy.

A community approach to crime management in Nigeria is the latest in the crime fighters attempt to control the rising crime rate in the country. Community policing is anchored on a systematic relationship between the police and the citizens. The transition from traditional policing to community policing is a global phenomenon and the Nigeria security personnel cannot be an exception (Okeshola & Patience, 2013). Indeed, community policing as a philosophy and practice is a veritable vehicle for police reforms (Okiro, 2007). In the recent times, the Nigeria police have indicted willingness to embrace community policing as advocated for by other developed nations like the US. The news on the plan to introduce community policing by the then President Buhari was announced by the then Inspector General of Police Mohammed Adamu at a forum of Northern Tradit. Community policing was formally launched throughout Nigeria on 24th April 2004 (Ezenkwu, 2013).

The practice of community policing in Kenya expands the partnership to all other government agencies, the private sector, NGOs and the civil society. Currently, community

policing is practiced under the Nyumba Kumi security initiative that has anchored at the household level aiming at achieving safe and secure neighborhoods since security agents alone cannot solve the problems of crime in Kenya. National Task Force report on Kenyas Police Reforms in the year 2009 pointed out that the agencies of policing need support from domestic communities towards reducing crime. Thus this demands for enhanced relations between the agencies of policing and the domestic communities. The Revised Program of police reforms 2015-2018 accentuates the essence of strengthening community policing practice.

According to Wambugu (2005) community policing controls crime due to its collaborative approach that results to saving on financial and human resources that are committed to patrols as well as institutionalize the collaboration between the Government and the public in matters of crime control. Many services offered by police across the globe now exercise community policing for purposes overcoming the disadvantages of reactive police method (Department for International Development, 2010). The services of policing that are concerned with the community (2012) point out that rather than reacting to crime when already committed, the policing aims at crime prevention and elimination of the created fear of the atmosphere. A big number of the common wealth nations constantly encounter opportunities which demand incorporation of the manner in which community policing is conducted (Republic of Kenya, 2015). The nations in common wealth, Kenya amongst them has moved from the reactive to the proactive policing through adoption of community policing being a strategy of policing in the 21st century.

In the nation of Kenya, development of this strategy is for providing a policing framework (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Chumba (2012) asserted that police are supposed to come up with positive relations with communities that they attend to for purposes of effectively addressing their concerns on security. Therefore, the National Police Services has linked with other policing agencies of the government in public Barazas to sensitize the inhabitants on community policing. The crime perpetrators reside with members of the community and interact with them on a daily basis and therefore there is the need of community members to cooperate with the policing agencies to get rid of this threat to security. Wanjohi (2014) agreed, partnerships in police-community assist in reducing and controlling crime. The majorly used methods of achieving partnerships in police-community towards crime prevention are by development of reachable stations as well as the police-community meetings. Police-community partnerships all serve towards a mutual interest and a community is concerned in giving solutions to challenges that are related to crime just as other agencies of security. A number of problems encountered by the partnerships of police-community include the community's unwillingness in providing information, insufficient finances and absence of shared trust. Muchira (2016) pointed that the partnership of police-community implies adoption of a policing perspective which surpasses the standard law execution emphasis.

4.0 Methodology

The study adopted descriptive case study research design so as to learn new insights and broaden the understanding of crime and crime control. The target population comprised of individuals who were directly or indirectly involved in crime control. These were the police officers, Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs, community policing members as well as senior village elders. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling method was applied in coming up with the sample size. The research employed primary and secondary sources of data where primary

data was gathered from participants whereas secondary data was gathered through relevant documents such as Government reports, policy documents, community policing manuals, civil society publications as well as UN documents.

5.0 Results and Discussion

The study sought to determine whether community policing was active in participant's place of residence. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Whether Community Policing was Active

Whether Active	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	97	62.2
No	59	37.8
Total	156	100

From the study findings, majority of the respondents 62.2% indicated that community policing was active in participant's place of residence whereas 37.8% were of the contrary opinion. This implies that community policing was active in most parts of Yatta Division in Machakos County.

The study sought to determine the period of time community policing had been active. Results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Period which community policing has been active

Period	Frequency	Percentage
One year	16	10.3
Two years	22	14.1
Three years	31	19.9
Four years	16	10.3
Over five years	39	25.0
System	32	20.5
Total	156	100.0

Results show that 25% community policing in their area of residence has been active for more that, five years, 19% indicated three years, 14% indicated two years, and 10.3% indicated one year or four years. This implies that in most places, community policing has been active for more than 3 years.

Participants were asked to clarify whether they attended community policing meetings. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Community Policing Meetings

Meetings	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	132	84.6
No	24	15.4
Total	156	100.0

Results show that, majority of the respondents (84.6%) agreed that they attended community policing meetings while 15.4% indicated otherwise. This therefore implies that considerable number of participants in this study attended community policing meetings in Yatta Sub-county. The findings concur with those of Wanjohi (2014) who revealed that partnerships on

police-community assist in reducing and controlling crime. The majorly used methods of achieving partnerships in police-community towards crime prevention are by development of reachable stations as well as the police-community meetings.

5.1 Problems Solved Through Community Policing Meetings

The study establishes that through community policing, various challenges confronting the larger society were resolved, among these include; domestic violence, communal land disputes, compliance on trade policies especially those governing natural resource utilization and drug and substance abused in the society. Participants also reported that community policing meeting encourages stakeholders to proactively develop solutions to the immediate underlying conditions contributing to public safety problems, reduction of hostility between the police and local residents. According to Wambugu (2005) community policing controls crime due to its collaborative approach that results to saving on financial and human resources that are committed to patrols as well as institutionalize the collaboration between the government and the public in matters of crime control. Many services offered by police across the globe now exercise community policing for purposes overcoming the disadvantages of reactive police method.

5.2 Reasons why some Locals could not participate in Community Policing Meetings

For those who indicated otherwise, majority indicated that they had busy schedules and thus unable to attend the community policing meetings, others reported that their view were not factored in implementation of strategic security plans and therefore regarded the community policing meeting as a total waste of time and lastly others recorded that security was purely a police docked and therefore none of their business.

Results show that implementation of community policing strategy is faced with numerous challenges, among which include inadequate training among the police has been seen to be lacking towards community policing efforts, lack of corporation from community members, in adequate access to community policing resources, inadequate logistic support and infrastructure, lack of serviceable information and technological equipment, structural and administrative weaknesses as well as the socio-cultural challenges, insufficient education and training and poor conditions of service of the average policeman. Chumba (2012) asserted that police are supposed to come up with positive relations with communities that they attend to for purposes of effectively addressing their concerns on security.

5.3 Challenges associated with community policing

Results show that, implementation of policing strategies was not smooth. For instance, local residents of Machakos County feared giving out information to police for fear of being attacked by the offensive groups such as cartels in illegal brews, police also faced a drawback in gathering relevant information on capital offenses. In some cases, locals indirectly interfered with case order investigations, intelligence gathering is a big challenge due to uncooperativeness from locals and that considerable number of locals was yet to embrace community policing. The findings go hand in hand with those of Muchira (2016) who revealed that a number of problems encountered by the partnerships of police-community include the community's unwillingness in providing information, insufficient finances and absence of shared trust. This study pointed that the partnership of police-community implies adoption of a policing perspective which surpasses the standard law execution emphasis.

6.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that community policing in Machakos had made a remarkable milestone in engaging the community and launching problem-solving efforts. For instance, community policing strategy enhanced trust between locals and police especially in identifying potential criminal threats

7.0 Recommendations

Reinvigorating community policing is essential as this acts as a primary key feature in detection of potential criminal threats in a society. However, in the process of building this partnership it must be undertaken with high levels of openness, accountability and trust, in other words these values that underlies and links the components of community partnership and problem solving. The National Government Administration Office (NGAO) and National Police Service (NPS) should strive to hold community policing meetings regularly and implement resolutions agreed upon. The accounting officer PS interior should avail financial resources to undertake this meeting in a structured manner.

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